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Response Paper, “I Think I Should Have Loved You Presently” and “I, Being Born a Woman and Distressed”

In the two poems “I Think I Should Have Loved You Presently” and “I, Being Born a Woman and Distressed”, Edna St. Vincent Millay described two opposite situations. In “I Think I Should Have Loved You Presently” the writer is reminiscing on her past memories and is wishing she had done something differently within her past romance. While in “I, Being Born a Woman and Distressed” the writer actually pursues her love interest, only to find that the experience is not as dreamy and ideal as Edna St. Vincent Millay has described in her “recurrent dream” in “I Think I Should Have Loved You Presently” (10). Edna St. Vincent Millay makes two very appealing arguments in these poems, she gives the reader two similar situations in which the writer makes different decisions in similar romance circumstances. Millay is utilizing opposites effectively when comparing these two poems.

In “I Think I Should Have Loved You Presently” the writer imagines what it would be like if she were to have actually pursued her love of the subject in the past, saying that the subject would look into her “honest eyes” and brush their hand upon her “cheek and breast” but sadly these two occurrences are only part of her “recurrent dream” (3,4,10). Millay lays out a situation in this poem where the writer desires the subject but missed her chance at loving them. Now the writer regrets not taking a chance on the subject and has this “recurring dream” of a romance between the writer and the subject (10). She mentions that she is just a “ghost in marble of a girl you knew” (13). The subject does not even notice her; she is a ghost to him. While in “I, Being Born a Woman and Distressed” the writer pursues her interest in a relationship with the subject even though her brain is telling her not to pursue this relationship, and subsequently the relationship ends up not being as dreamy and perfect as the relationship described in the writer’s “recurring dream” in “I Think I Should Have Loved You Presently”.

In “I, Being Born a Woman and Distressed”, the writers actions are opposite of what is described in “I Think I Should Have Loved You Presently”. In this situation, the writer pursues a romance with the subject even though her “stout blood” is going against her “staggering brain” (10). Her heart wanted to pursue the romance, but her brain was telling her no. She decided to go with her heart and pursue the relationship; therefore the two poems are opposites. The first poem is a situation in which she did not pursue a relationship and regretted it, while the second is a situation where she did pursue the romance, but it was not the ideal and perfect romance as described in the dream sequence in “I Think I Should Have Loved You Presently”. This situation brings up some concerns that everyone has at one point in their lives. Is it better to say no to certain situations sometimes in order to not risk heartbreak or disappointment or is it better to put yourself out there and make experiences but risk heartbreak or disappointment? Millay describes these two opposite romances very well and makes her readers wonder what they would do in that very situation.